

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and study of old-time dime and nickel novels, popular story papers, series books, and pulp magazines

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## DIME NOVEL SKETCHES



No. 280: MRS L. T. MEADE SERIES

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## THE HITCHING POST

This issue is being printed and mailed a few weeks later than originally scheduled. Ye old editor has been laid up for awhile recovering following surgery to repair a detached retina in his left eye. Reading and editing on the computer have been limited to short periods of time each day. We can cite only a few occasions in the past when something prevented the regular delivery of these pages to all subscribers. One was in 1932 when illness prevented the founding editor, "Reckless Ralph Cummings" from getting *DNRU* out between the July-August issue and the May-June issue the following year. Not a bad record for a "fan" publication.

Over three years ago, a group of scholars of dime novels, series books and pulp magazines gathered in the Ernest Stevenson Bird Library at Syracuse University in the summer for a symposium to celebrate the contributions of Street & Smith to our field of research. The occasion allowed many of those present to work in the Street & Smith Archive housed there. Much of the content of this issue has been drawn from material presented at that symposium.

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# THEODORE DREISER AND HIS STREET AND SMITH CIRCLE

Lydia Cushman Schurman  
Arlington, Virginia

Theodore Dreiser, author of such classic Naturalistic novels in American literature as *Sister Carrie*, *Jennie Gerhardt*, and *An American Tragedy*, was associated with the Street and Smith publishing house for a period of seven years, from 1898, when he first began to write for *Ainslee's* magazine, through mid-March 1906. His eighteen months actually working for the firm (since around early September 1904) had been spent as an editor, first as an assistant editor of boys' dime novels and then as editor of *Smith's* magazine.<sup>1</sup>

Although scholars recognize the firm as a vehicle for the publication of Dreiser's early non-fiction, only a few attach much significance to Dreiser's time there because the writing he did for Street and Smith seemed to have no effect on developing his literary style.<sup>2</sup> While this is true, Dreiser's association with the firm was important, however, because of the friends he had there, men who relied upon him and respected him at a time he was emerging from a bitter period of doubt and despair. Dreiser himself indicated the period spent at the firm was meaningful because on a handwritten list entitled "Literary Experiences" he listed it second: "Street and Smyth—(Diamond Dick." [sic]<sup>3</sup> This list contains many of Dreiser's most important literary experiences between 1894, when he left a job on the *New York World*, through 1925, when he wrote *An American Tragedy*. Dreiser planned to develop the experiences he had listed into a book, which was to be another volume in a projected five-volume autobiographical *History of Myself*, of which *Dawn* and *Newspaper Days* comprise the first and second volumes.<sup>4</sup>

In 1928 Dreiser enthusiastically wrote H.L. Mencken, "*Literary Experiences* is underway. I do a small bit—now & then. Ah, the opportunity that lies there, my good brother—the nobles of the nineties and nineteen ten."<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, Dreiser abandoned the project sometime between 1931 and 1936; thus forever lost are his reminiscences of the Street and Smith publishing house. Fortunately, however, first-hand evidence of the texture of these years and colorful vignettes of Dreiser's friendships at the firm exist in a handful of early unpublished letters located in the Theodore Dreiser Collection at the University of Pennsylvania.

Written from 1897 through 1906, they are exchanges between Dreiser and members of his Street and Smith circle: among them, George Charles Jenks, Gilman Hall, Richard Duffy, and Frederick Merrill Van Rensselaer Dey.<sup>6</sup>

George Jenks, author of such Street and Smith dime novel heroes as Rough Rider Ted Strong, sheriff Diamond Dick, and detective Nick Carter, first met Dreiser when they were "spacemen" [A term meaning a journalist paid according to the space occupied by his writing. Ed] on the *New York World* in 1894. Jenks, then in his early forties, had been kind and generous to the twenty-three-year-old Dreiser, who was new to the city. Although Dreiser does not identify Jenks by name in *Newspaper Days*, Dreiser gives a portrait of him then: "At a desk near the directory, I noticed a stout man of perhaps forty, rotund and agreeable, who seemed to be less fierce and self-centered than some of the others...."<sup>7</sup> Dreiser explained the many kindnesses Jenks extended to him in those early days on the *World*. Jenks told him how to find Elizabeth, New Jersey, where Dreiser was sent on his first assignment; Jenks commiserated with Dreiser on their meager wages, explained the unfairness of their jobs, and demonstrated the advisability of liberally figuring out expense accounts. "I'm only staying on until I get something better," he told Dreiser. "It's a dog's life."<sup>8</sup>

However, no sooner did Jenks leave New York to go to Pittsburgh, than he wanted to return. "I know I may rely upon your friendship to help me to some sort of employment in the literary line," he wrote Dreiser in the spring of 1899. "If you think so, will you not do the part of a very good friend and see the right people for me before I come to New York?"<sup>9</sup> Jenks went on to describe his plight. "It is starvation here and it can not be much worse in New York. I am just about flat broke now, and it is the kind of time when a man has to throw himself a great deal upon the mercy of his friends."

Dreiser must have written an immediate reply because three days later, Jenks wrote again. "My Dear Dreiser: I have just got your very friendly letter, and hasten to acknowledge it in the warmest spirit of gratitude. All I want to do is to get into the literary and art circles in which you are making such headway. I have always felt that a feeling of comradeship has existed between you and me since the days we warmed chairs on the [New York] 'World'... Things in the newspaper world are very bad here. I am 'subbing' on the *Leader* for two dollars a day. What do you think of that?" he asked, adding sardonically. "Of course the work is nothing, but just think of the remuneration."<sup>10</sup>

Turning to personal matters, Jenks congratulated Dreiser on his marriage. "Wedded life," Jenks wrote, "is the only proper state for a man who is more than a mere brute, and I have proved my convictions by taking a third wife,

having been married about two months ago." These two letters, warm and friendly, show the reliance Jenks placed upon his young friend and his trust that Dreiser would help him. In turn, Dreiser's fast response shows his concern for Jenks.

At this time, the two men were in very different positions. Dreiser was highly successful, a situation which had not always been the case nor would it remain so. Although Jenks had authored the first of his four books, *The Official History of the Johnstown Flood*, in 1890, he was unsettled in 1899, trying to relocate. Dreiser, on the other hand, that year was in the first edition of *Who's Who*, would start writing *Sister Carrie* in November,<sup>11</sup> and was contributing to numerous popular magazines: *Ainslee's*, *Munsey's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Success*, *Demorest's*, *Metropolitan*, *Colliers*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. The two had kept in close touch since their days on the *New York World*. In 1895, a year after that experience, Dreiser had become editor of *Ev'ry Month*, a magazine which modestly described itself as "The Handsomest Musical Magazine in the World," published by Howley, Haviland, and Company, a firm in which his song-writing brother, Paul Dresser [he changed the spelling of his name], author of "My Gal Sal" and "On the Banks of the Wabash," was a partner. Although Dreiser's job was to publish songs and cater to popular taste, he tried to give the magazine a cultural flavor, and, in October 1896, had asked Jenks to become the magazine's literary editor, a position Jenks accepted with alacrity and held until 1897.

Jenks, the more established literary figure at the time, wrote a monthly column about literary affairs.<sup>12</sup> Probably the most significant influence he exerted over Dreiser then was his appreciation of the young Stephen Crane, especially of the artistry in Crane's Bowery journalism. In the February 1897 issue of *Ev'ry Month*, Jenks devoted his column to an analysis of Crane's "perfervid" style, his most "graphic example" being Crane's "Men in the Storm." He believed that Crane's greatest talent was his ability to infuse life and color into even the most sordid topic, to show "latent poetry" in the mundane.<sup>13</sup> So significant was this review that it marked another important stage in Dreiser's literary development, for through it and Crane's "Men in the Storm" Dreiser saw the possibilities in writing about the Bowery.<sup>14</sup> His "Curious Shifts of the Poor," published in *Demorest's Magazine* of November 1899, was his first response to that understanding; the disintegration of Hurstwood in *Sister Carrie* was another response as Dreiser crossed the line between journalism and literary realism. Thus, although the literary artistry was Dreiser's, the seed from which it first bore fruit was planted by George Jenks.



Personable and charming, Jenks was known as a "splendid figure," a "delightful person."<sup>15</sup> English by birth, he had had little formal schooling and a humble boyhood during which he became a printer's apprentice. He had arrived in America at twenty in 1872, a year after Dreiser's birth, and worked as a printer for ten years. In 1882 he became a newspaper reporter on the *Pittsburgh Press*, a position he held until 1886, the same year he wrote two dime novels for Beadle and Adams.<sup>16</sup> Thus by the time Dreiser met Jenks he had been writing dime novels for eight years; it was something Jenks would do the rest of his life. Moreover, Jenks shared Dreiser's interest in serious writing, as his stint on *Ev'ry Month* showed, and, over the years, he authored several short stories for various periodicals, wrote book reviews for the *New York Times*, contributed to *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, wrote three more books, and lectured on story writing and newspaper work.<sup>17</sup>

When Dreiser edited for Street and Smith from 1904 to 1906, Jenks was writing the Diamond Dick tales from 1905 to 1906.<sup>18</sup> The reason Dreiser mentioned Diamond Dick on the "Literary Experience" list was because he had been associated with the series as editor, perhaps even, at times, as co-author, while having a lark with his friend Jenks in planning the escapades of a dime novel sheriff hero.<sup>19</sup> There is nothing in Dreiser's papers that links him to any other dime novel series.

When Dreiser left the firm, Jenks wrote him a thoughtful note. "For my own sake," he said, "I am sorry that you have left Street and Smith, because I may not see you so often ... Mrs. Jenks and I are always trying to get around to your house. Could not you and Mrs. Dreiser drop in on us?... If you don't come here, we shall certainly soon be ringing your bell."<sup>20</sup>

Another letter, a lengthy one from Gilman Hall, Duffy's assistant editor at *Ainslee's* and Dreiser's friend at Street and Smith, arrived three months after the first two letters from Jenks; it described in some detail life at *Ainslee's* in 1899 under publishers "O. G." and "G. C." Smith.<sup>21</sup>

"Dear Dreiser" and "Dear Henry [Dreiser's friend Arthur Henry]," Hall began. He said he was writing at the request of editor Richard Duffy, who believed that as contributors they should be told "the exact state of affairs" as it might "materially change your plans for the coming winter." Hall elaborated on "the change for the worse that has befallen *Ainslee's Magazine* and ourselves."

"Our first thought," he wrote, "was that O. G. and G. C. had quarreled about the magazine and O. G. had said in answer to his brother's 'kicks' — 'Well! Hell! If you don't like the way I am running it, why run it yourself.' But now

we are more inclined to think they are riding for a fall."

Hall reported that for the past month there had been "a steady lopping off of expenses," that Mr. Smith had ordered the magazine dropped to ninety-six pages, had canceled a serial, and had solicited an article without telling them.<sup>22</sup> A man "who owed Mr. Smith money on a poker debt was given an order for a series of six stories," Hall reported. And, finally, "Then Mr. G. C. practically assumed the office of editor of the magazine." Concluded Hall, "We cannot hold out any encouragement for anything much. Have you anything to suggest? Do you know any chance for us — preferably in a body but by necessity individually?"

The confidences shared in this letter not only show Hall's trust in Dreiser and Henry but also concern for their welfare as contributors to *Ainslee's*. Hall's appeal at the end for suggestions on how all four of them might continue to work together indicates his desire to do so, while his references to the Smiths by their initials "O. G." and "G. C." show Dreiser already shared an "in-house" familiarity with these "nobles of the nineties." Hall's descriptions of the Smith brothers also afford interesting insights into their personalities and management practices.

Seven years later, in 1906, Hall addressed "Dear Mr. Dreiser," who apparently had charged him with being deceitful because he had failed to tell Dreiser about his resignation from *Ainslee's* one day when Dreiser had dropped by the office. Explained Hall: "George C. Smith knew about it — but he hadn't told me up to that time. You see, he had an eager yearning to see how I would write a resignation and the day after you were in, he asked me to send him down a sample copy — showing how I would phrase a resigned [resignation] letter — and I became resigned to the idea.

"Come and see me," he concluded, "and I'll tell you more about it all."<sup>23</sup>

A year later, Dreiser's personal world began to fall apart. The story of his life from 1900 through 1903, movingly recounted in his autobiographical *An Amateur Laborer*, forms a poignant chapter in American literary studies: the rejection of his first novel, *Sister Carrie*; his resultant nervous breakdown; his contemplated suicide; his stay in a sanitarium; his menial jobs as plumber's assistant and mason's helper as he nursed himself back to health.<sup>24</sup>

Through this difficult period, Richard Duffy, Street and Smith editor of *The Yellow Kid*, *The Yellow Book*, and *Ainslee's*, maintained a close friendship with Dreiser. Like Jenks, Duffy had started his connection with Street and Smith in 1895, when he started rewriting plays in novel format; "novelized drama" was how Street and Smith described the result. Duffy suggested authors for Dreiser

to read, including John Stuart Mill's description of his own nervous breakdown, and brought Dreiser books. He sent Dreiser \$50, which Duffy gracefully called a loan.<sup>25</sup> Even when Dreiser submitted articles to *Ainslee's* and Duffy rejected them, he did so with sensitivity and tact, commenting in a letter in the spring of 1900, for example, that Dreiser's submission was "too poetic for our purposes."<sup>26</sup> Duffy also added a personal note: "And I wish to thank you and Mrs. Dreiser for her great kindness in calling on Mrs. Duffy — not forgetting Sylvia [the new baby] also. Mrs. Duffy is home again, but very weak and tired."

By far the most candid letter that Dreiser addressed to anyone in his Street and Smith circle during these years is a letter to Duffy written just before Christmas in 1901. Duffy's Christmas gift of a book of poems by Walt Whitman had set Dreiser "to pondering the value of your friendship and its continued expression through these several years."<sup>27</sup> Dreiser added, "How much I appreciate the substance of kindness between men I have long hoped to make clear but I seem to have a poor medium for my thoughts...."

"Your friendship is a hearty thing," Dreiser continued. "I think I have told you more than once that I like your wholesome stride through life. It is not attenuated or egoistically refined and there is good cheer by your fire. I would rather have it than more of the soulless intellectual." Dreiser's descriptive phrases here show the nature of his friendship with Duffy: "hearty," cheerful, warm, vibrant.

"I wish I knew of something that you liked," Dreiser said, "and yet I will not attempt a present this year. They are only signs to me of something better and that you already have my friendship and goodwill." In concluding, Dreiser extended Christmas wishes to Mrs. Duffy and the children. "As for you," he directed Duffy, "lift up a good glass of wine for me Christmas eve and pledge me in it." In a postscript he added, "Mrs. Dreiser inquires after you and Mrs. Duffy."

In his response, Duffy recognized the letter as a rare and unique expression of Dreiser's feelings. His reply, early in January, is equally revealing.<sup>28</sup> "My Dear Dreiser," he remarked, "Your letter of Dec. 23rd was as pleasant a Christmas souvenir as you could send. I have re-read it several times. You know one does not often get so much of a purely personal statement from you.

"I have been wanting to write an adequate answer," Duffy elaborated, "but I know now I cannot. So much of all that has happened since we first knew each other sprang up in new life at the suggestion of your letter!... You have had your ideas and I have had mine; and like the children by the first marriage of people



who marry a second time, our ideas have not always played nicely together. You have your good qualities and I have mine .... But in spite of and on account of these things we incline towards each other. You look far afield in the world and so do I. We see strange, attractive new faces, hear new voices, and learn new facts; but we always look back at each other, at the old faces, listen to the old voices and recall the old facts, finding all good and sound."

It was probably Duffy who had told Dreiser about the opening at Street and Smith, as an assistant editor of boys' dime novels, when he was well enough to start writing again. Duffy left the firm in 1905 because he had been rejected as a partner in *Ainslee's* by Ormond G. Smith. Nevertheless, under Duffy's leadership, *Ainslee's* had become a prestigious publication, featuring regular contributions by Dreiser, O. Henry, Bret Harte, Rudyard Kipling, and A. Conan Doyle. Duffy's move to *Tom Watson's Magazine*, however, caused no interruption in his friendship with Dreiser; they would remain friends for the rest of their lives.

Far different a personality from Duffy was another friend of Dreiser's who was also laboring at Street and Smith while Dreiser was there — Frederic Merrill Van Rensselaer Dey, a former police court reporter on the *New York World*, six years Dreiser's senior, and author of the Nick Carter dime novels, as well as other stories for Street and Smith.<sup>29</sup> It was Dey who made Detective Nick Carter one of the most popular dime novel heroes. To the reading public at large in those days, the name Nick Carter was far better known than such names as William Dean Howells or Henry James. In fact, so famous were the Nick Carter tales that once a letter to Dey from Russia addressed simply to "Nick Carter, the United States" was safely delivered to Dey at Street and Smith.<sup>30</sup>

Dey was one of Dreiser's most colorful friends in the dime novel world, a scion of three of New York's most distinguished aristocratic families, a member of New York's privileged "Four Hundred" — but without the bank account.<sup>31</sup> A reincarnation of Mark Twain's Colonel Mulberry Sellers, Dey always claimed he was about to make a fortune; he was, however, more often on the brink of financial disaster. A well educated man, he had graduated from Cornell University and the New York University Law School. Unfortunately, Dey had a drinking problem. Nevertheless, despite this difficulty and short term rests in a sanitarium, he continued to write Nick Carter tales, averaging five to six thousand words a day, approximately one story a week, for twenty-four years, 1891 to 1915. He is credited with writing ninety per cent of the Nick Carter adventures, about 2,352 titles, many of which were translated into twelve

languages.<sup>32</sup>

In letters, written around or in 1905 to "My Dear Theodore," Dey invited the Dreisers to his home in Westport, Connecticut, counted on Dreiser to get him out of trouble at the office, and solicited Dreiser's help in getting an advance from George C. Smith.

Corresponding as an amanuensis for his wife, he wrote, " 'Tell Mr. Dreiser, that we are expecting him and Mrs. Dreiser to come to us on Sunday.<sup>33</sup> Say that they are expected on the train which leaves 125th street station at 10:16, Sunday morning, and which arrives at South Norwalk at 11.11, where you ... will meet them ... Say to him that dinner will be prepared for four persons ... and that there will be two vacant places at the table if they fail to appear.' "

"Now do try to come, wont [sic] you?" Dey added to her message. "We both want you to do so very much...." <sup>34</sup>

In another letter, Dey thanked Dreiser for saying he would intercede with George C. Smith in an attempt to get Dey a sixty dollar advance.<sup>35</sup> "This is very kind of you, old chap," Dey exclaimed, "and if you knew the terrible situation I am in just now as the result of my Wrong doing, I know that you would do it all the more eagerly for me."

Passages in the letter suggest that Dey had appeared drunk in the office; "Mrs. Dey told me the other day that you remarked that I was probably 'sore' at you for what you said to me that day I was in the office. My dear chap, don't ever think that for a moment. If you had said ten thousand times more, it probably wouldn't have done any good at the time, but I would have deserved it, just the same." Or again, "If you have felt half the disgust for me that I have felt for myself, your opinion must have sunk to a very low ebb."

Dey described his situation in Westport to Dreiser candidly, providing sad insights into Dey's finances, as well as his faith in Dreiser as a friend in whom he could confide. "I have had no money for a long time and I am new in this town, so that people here — the tradesmen and my landlord — do not know what to think of it all," he wrote. "The bills were sent in to us the first of the month, Milk, ice, butcher, grocer, laundry and all that, and now it is the 18th, and they have got tired of waiting. All of this worry, and not knowing what minute you may be thrown out of a home, is not precisely conducive to the best story writing ... I have exactly fifty cents in the house, and I must save that for postage to send in the story. We are out of coal and — well, everything is about in that condition...."

"I know that it is my own fault and that I have no right to expect sympathy or help from anybody, but it does seem that I would be pretty close to heaven



tomorrow [sic] if I could pay these bills here and look my neighbors in the eye without a feeling of goneness around the heart."

Despite his problems, Dey reported he was "in splendid shape physically and was writing "about twelve thousand words a day," and that he was about to mail another story to the office. In concluding, he repeated his request to Dreiser to get the sixty dollar advance from George Smith. "So do what you can for me old fellow," Dey urged. "Sixty dollars would enable me to pay one of the months [sic] rent that I owe, and to pay the bills around town .... If he will send me the sixty for this story that you have now, the whole sixty for the story I will send Thursday night may be credited to my account — or rather to the account against me ... Please tell him that will you.[sic] ... I think when Mr. Smith understands the situation ... he will consent to send me sixty dollars as soon as he arrives at the office tomorrow; and will you not put a special delivery stamp on it so they will send it around to me the moment it arrives?"

"I intend to begin the 'great American novel' now, as soon as I get ahead with the Nick Carter."

However, Dey never realized this ambition. Instead, he stayed with Street and Smith writing Nick Carter stories. Then one spring day in April 1922, Dey checked into a New York hotel and put a bullet through his head. In a farewell note to his wife he explained, "My engine has gone dead in the air and — there is no safe landing in sight!"<sup>36</sup>

These few surviving letters from Dreiser's early career reveal the closeness within Dreiser's Street and Smith circle. All of its members shared a desire to be serious writers, although only Dreiser would fully realize their common goal. Curiously enough, since Dreiser was the youngest member, most of them relied on him: Jenks for help in breaking into New York's literary circles; Hall for finding a way to continue to work together; Dey for getting an advance from George C. Smith. The letters also show the sincere affection Dreiser shared with the others: to Jenks, Dreiser was "a very good friend"; to Duffy, although traveling different roads, "we always look back at each other"; and to Dey, Dreiser was simply "old chap," "old fellow." The circle also expanded to include families: the men sent greetings to each others' wives; the Dreisers called on the Jenkses and the Duffys; the Deys invited the Dreisers to Connecticut. Lastly, as in any friendship, they exchanged confidences and trust: both Jenks and Dey frankly related their job situations and asked Dreiser unashamedly for help; Hall wrote Dreiser candidly about his treatment at the hands of the Smith brothers; Dreiser openly expressed his feelings of friendship to Duffy and Duffy his to Dreiser; Dey admitted his "Wrong doing" and

described his finances in stark detail. The camaraderie revealed in the letters is significant because it testifies to and illuminates the quality of Dreiser's friendships at a crucial period in his life as he grew well and strong again during the time he worked at the Street and Smith publishing house.

### NOTES

1. The dates of Dreiser's employment at Street and Smith are established by a letter from Henry Harrison Lewis addressed to him there on September 9, 1904. Dreiser left Street and Smith by mid-March, a date established by a letter to him from George C. Jenks of 21 March 1906, in which Jenks expresses his regret that Dreiser has already left the firm.
2. In "Carrie's Sisters: The Popular Prototypes for Dreiser's Heroine," *Modern Fiction Studies* 23 (Autumn 1977): 395-407, Cathy and Arnold Davidson were the first to point out that working-girl tales from such story papers as the *New York Weekly* published by Street and Smith provided a prototype for Carrie Meeber, the heroine of *Sister Carrie*.
3. "Literary Experience," Folder 169, Theodore Dreiser Collection, Department of Special Collections, University of Pennsylvania Van Pelt-Dietrich Library, University of Pennsylvania. The author acknowledges the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania and the Department of Special Collections, Van Pelt-Dietrich Library, University of Pennsylvania, for granting permission to quote from "Literary Experience." Curiously enough, *Ev'ry Month*, which Dreiser edited from 1896-97 is not on the list.
4. Yoshinobu Hakutani, *Young Dreiser: A Critical Study* (Rutherford, New Jersey, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980), footnote 1, 203-04.
5. *Letters of Theodore Dreiser*, ed. Robert Elias (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), vol. I, 289; Hakutani, *Young Dreiser*, footnote 1, 203.
6. The letters of these friends quoted in this paper are located in the Theodore Dreiser Collection, Department of Special Collections, Van Pelt-Dietrich Library, the University of Pennsylvania. The author is indebted to the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania and the Department of Special Collections for permission to quote from these unpublished letters.
7. Theodore Dreiser, *History of Myself: Newspaper Days* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1922), 471-72.



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8. Dreiser, *History of Myself*, 477.

9. George C. Jenks to Theodore Dreiser, 23 May 1899. This letter is the source for the rest of the quotes in this paragraph.

10. George C. Jenks to Theodore Dreiser, 26 May 1899. The quotes in the next paragraph are also from this letter.

11. Richard Lingeman, *Theodore Dreiser: At the Gates of the City 1871-1907* (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1986), 229.

12. For a thoughtful analysis of Jenks's work and his interest in Stephen Crane, see Ellen Moers, *Two Dreisers* (New York: The Viking Press, 1969), 37-38 and 57-69. See also the review by Jenks of *The Little Regiment*, in "Literary Shower," *Ev'ry Month*, January 1897, and his comments on *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and *George's Mother* in "Things Literary" in the same issue. Lingeman, *Theodore Dreiser: At the Gates of the City*, 226, also mentions Jenks.

13. George C. Jenks, "Some Views of Fiction, The Pertervid Type," *Ev'ry Month*, February 1897, 22; Moers, 38.

14. Moers, *Two Dreisers*, 38.

15. Harry Keller, "If You Must Write," *The Editor*, May 21, 1932, 152.

16. The two dime novels, each with a circus theme, were: "Rube Rocket, The Tent Detective; or, The Treacherous Two. A Romance of the Ring," *Beadle's Dime Library*, no. 538; and "Fearless Sam, the Grand Combination Detective; or, The Man with the Evil Eye," *Beadle's Dime Library*, no. 726.

17. The other books by Jenks were *The Climax* (1910), *The Deserters* (1911) and *Stop Thief* (1913).

18. "Diamond Dick, Jr.," Street and Smith Ledger Number 24249, 74-78.

19. This argument is developed in my dissertation: Lydia S. Godfrey, "Theodore Dreiser and the Dime Novel World; or, the Missing Chapter in Dreiser's Life, 1894-1906," University of Maryland, 1984. In "Did Dreiser Cut Up Jack Harkaway?" *The Markham Review*, May 1968, Kenneth W. Scott offers a thoughtful argument that Dreiser may have revised the Jack Harkaway tales by English author Bracebridge Hemyng but lacks any specific proof; his argument, therefore, is interesting but hypothetical. Richard

Lingeman, however, in *Theodore Dreiser: At the Gates of the City*, 390-92, accepts Scott's hypothesis and presents it as fact, adding in a footnote, 453, as further proof that the "Literary Experience" fragment, Box 169 at the University of Pennsylvania, "reads Street and Smith—Diamond Dick." Since there is no connection between the dime novel series *Diamond Dick* and the Jack Harkaway stories, Lingeman's meaning is unclear and his description of Dreiser's work on the Harkaway novels is colorful but unsupported.

20. George C. Jenks to Theodore Dreiser, 21 March 1906.

21. Gilman Hall to Theodore Dreiser and Arthur Henry, 4 August 1899. All quotes from Hall are from this letter. "O. G." refers to Ormond G. Smith and "G. C." refers to George C. Smith.

22. When mentioning "Mr. Smith," Hall did not specify to which one he referred.

23. Quentin Reynolds, *The Fiction Factory* (New York: Random House, 1955), 134-35, reports a different version of Hall's dismissal. According to Reynolds, Ormond G. Smith's secretary added a postscript onto a letter to Hall, which contradicted Smith's opinion about a story by Charles Garvice being considered for *Ainslee's*. Hall was away when the letter came, but an assistant read it, then sent it back to Smith, who was outraged because he felt the letter showed disloyalty and indicated the secretary and Hall shared a lack of confidence in Smith's taste. According to this account, Hall and the secretary were fired.

24. Theodore Dreiser, *An Amateur Laborer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

25. Lingeman, *Theodore Dreiser: At the Gates of the City*, 352.

26. Richard Duffy to Theodore Dreiser, April 26, 1900. All quoted material in this paragraph is from this letter.

27. Theodore Dreiser to Richard Duffy, December 23, 1901. Quoted material by Dreiser in this and the next several paragraphs comes from this letter.

28. Richard Duffy to Theodore Dreiser, January 16, 1902. Quoted material by Duffy in this and the next two paragraphs comes from this letter.



29. While a reporter on the *New York World*, Dreiser had been routinely assigned to the East 27th Street Police Station, which Dey frequented in attempts to get ideas for his Nick Carter plots from Inspector Thomas A. Byrnes. "'Nick Carter' A Suicide at 61," *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 27, 1922; "'Nick Carter's Creator, Expert in Violent Deaths, Kills Self," *New York Herald Tribune*, April 26, 1922. It is, therefore, possible Dreiser met Dey during his tenure on the *World*.

30. William James Dobbin, "Nick Carter's Father and His Last Flight, *New York Tribune*, 7 May 1922, Section V.

31. Dobbin. Dey was descended from the Van Rensselaers, van Cortlandts, and Schuylers of New York.

32. Dobbin. See also J. Randolph Cox, "Nick Carter Literary Supplement," *Dime Novel Round-Up* No. 502, July 15, 1974.

33. Mrs. Dey was Haryot Holt Dey, an influential woman in her own right; in 1922 she was editor of *The Woman's Home Journal* and President of the Women's Press Club of New York.

34. Frederic Dey to Theodore Dreiser, undated, probably circa 1905.

35. Frederic Dey to Theodore Dreiser, July 18, 1905. Quoted material by Dey in this and the next several paragraphs comes from this letter.

36. Dobbin. See also "'Nick Carter' Kills Himself With Gun," *New York Herald Tribune*, 7 May 1922.

Theodore Dreiser ca. 1893, just a decade before he went to work at Street & Smith as an editor of dime novels.



# RESEARCHING THE *BOYS' OWN LIBRARY*: A STREET AND SMITH EXPERIMENT

John T. Dizer  
Utica, New York

What do we mean by a "library" as applied to a series title like the *Boys' Own Library*? "Libraries" were common at the turn of the century. At that time publishers might put together a number of titles in a uniform binding, either paperback or hardcover, and issue them as a "library." Or they might start a library with a few titles and add titles as the success of the library warranted.

Libraries go back at least as far as the early days of dime novels. Albert Johannsen notes in his *House of Beadle and Adams* that the *American Library* was published from 1861 to 1866.

Street and Smith's *Log Cabin Library* ran for 456 weekly issues from 1889 to 1897. Their *Medal Library* appeared from 1899 to 1916 with 858 papercovered volumes. Their *Magnet Library* of 483 papercovered volumes was followed by the *New Magnet Library* which ran from volume 484, issued in 1907, to volume 1369 in 1933.

The *Boys' Own Library* of Street and Smith was a collection of between 87 and over 150 hardcover boys' books, issued between 1902 and 1904 and continued by other publishers into at least the late 1920s. The dates are uncertain.

Here is the way the publisher described this library:

This series contains the best boys' books written by the best authors for boys.

The stories are of the bright and sparkling kind, full of adventure, not overburdened with lengthy descriptions...

The works in the Boys' Own Library are alike in size and make-up, but each set has a distinct cover. They can be purchased either in complete sets, or a book at a time.

The publisher called it "The Cream of Juvenile Fiction."

The *Boys' Own Library* included a large number of authors and subjects.

Horatio Alger was well-represented as well as such writers as James Otis, Gilbert Patten, William Murray Graydon, Edward S. Ellis, Lieutenant Lounsberry, and Edward Stratemeyer. Many titles were by regular writers for Street and Smith and had appeared earlier in other formats, both papercover and hardcover. As issued by Street and Smith the books appeared in up to 20 different cover formats with no distinguishing marks. The library was often advertised as containing 135 titles, but it began with about 87 and on occasion contained over 150.

Particularly in the Street and Smith editions, the books are both hard to find and hard to identify. There is no identifying logo on them as there is on the later edition published by David McKay. Collecting the *Boys' Own Library*, therefore, can be a real challenge.

Why do I call the *Boys' Own Library* an experiment? A broad look at the series shows a number of differences between the Street and Smith operation and the standard juvenile publishing practices of the day. A few are:

1. During that time period, when juvenile books were issued in series the number of titles was usually limited to around 4 to 6. In this case there were over 100 titles in the library and many separate series as well within it.

2. The library included both "singles" and multi-volume series by a large number of authors. As examples, both Alger and Stratemeyer were represented by individual titles but not by a series while St. George Rathborne had two series within the library (Camp and Canoe Series and Ranch and Range Series).

3. The 20 different cover designs were used for a number of series so those series could be, and were, sold separately from the *Boys' Own Library*.

4. All titles were either owned by Street and Smith or were in the public domain.

5. The cost of the individual titles was set at 75 cents even though other juveniles from Street and Smith were priced higher. Most publishers at this time worked on the principle of a high unit profit and priced their juveniles in the \$1.25 to \$1.50 range.

The *Boys' Own Library* was an early attempt at producing hardcover juveniles for a mass market. It was partly a transfer of the publisher's marketing techniques from paperbacks to hardcover boys' books. Although Street and Smith had printed some hardcover juveniles prior to and contemporaneous with this series, the production of this particular series seems to have been a major move for them.

Although Street and Smith produced the series for another two years (until 1906) the titles in the library were also leased to, and published by, the Federal



Book, Company. At the end of that time, Street and Smith sold the *Boys' Own Library* to David McKay who continued the series until about 1928. All three publishers added or deleted titles from the series, apparently at will. Why Street and Smith made these arrangements is not known. Whether initial sales were disappointing or the publisher felt they had no business in hardcover publishing is a real question.

Generally we give credit to Edward Stratemeyer for successfully introducing mass marketing techniques to the popular juvenile book market in 1906. The *Boys' Own Library* (which included five of Stratemeyer's titles) was a pioneering effort, several years earlier than the founding of the Stratemeyer Syndicate. His five books in the *Boys' Own Library* had been first published as serials in *Good News*, of which he had been editor in the 1890s.

The *Boys' Own Library* had two spin-off series which are worth noting. One was the *Boys' Popular Library* of 57 titles by Oliver Optic, G. A. Henty, W. H. G. Kingston, Horatio Alger and others; the other was the *Girls' Popular Library* with titles by Alice Carey, Mary A. Denison, Lewis Carroll and Mrs. J. H. Ewing among the authors. Books in each series sold for 50 cents. I find no evidence that either series was very successful.

Researching the *Boys' Own Library* has proved to be an interesting and time-consuming challenge. The best published reference on the *Boys' Own Library* remains Denis Rogers' 1970 article for *Dime Novel Round-Up*,<sup>1</sup> but other articles on the publishing practices of Street and Smith can be found in the magazine. Besides the *Round-Up*, the best sources have been the Street and Smith Archives at Syracuse University, articles and advertisements in *Publishers' Weekly*, and the books themselves with their lists of titles, advertisements for books by specific authors and the physical format.

On the basis of these sources, then, what have I learned? Here is part of it.

In *Publishers' Weekly* (February 3, 1900) Street and Smith noted the purchase of book-plates from the American Publishers' Corp. and, "at a recent date," the majority of the titles included in the Cassell Publishing Company list. Street and Smith stated, "[Street and Smith] lines embrace a range of retail prices from 10 cents in paper to \$1.25 in their best cloth binding." So the publisher was definitely in the hardcover business in 1900 and, I believe, a year or two earlier.

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1. Denis R. Rogers. "The Boys' Own Library," *Dime Novel Round-Up* vol. 39 (no. 453) June 15, 1970. Denis's article contains a list of over 150 titles from the *Library*, arranged by author. Copies are still available from the editor's office (P.O. Box 226, Du8ndas, MN 55019-0226) for \$3, postage included.

Hardcover titles in the *Sea Shore and Mountain Series* bear 1900 copyright dates. One problem with copyright dates is that we are never sure whether the dates apply to initial printings as paperbacks or hardcover books. [Sometimes they refer to initial printings in story papers or nickel weeklies. Some titles in this series were also published in paper covers about this time as titles in other series, such as *The Romance Series*. Ed] This is particularly true of the *Boys' Own Library* where many of the hardcover titles first appeared as story paper serials.

It seems quite certain, but hard to prove, that Street and Smith was printing hardcover juveniles by about 1900. Examining a few samples, I note that the early Street and Smith Henty titles were all pirated and so do not contain copyright dates. *Check 2134* by Edward S. Ellis was copyrighted by Munsey, United States Book Co., and finally in 1900 by Street and Smith. My Street and Smith edition of his *From Tent to White House* has 1898 and 1899 copyright dates, but my McKay edition of the same book (which must have been published after 1906) has a 1901 Street and Smith copyright date as well. *The Silver Ship* by Leon Lewis was copyrighted by Street and Smith in 1888, but was part of the *Boys' Own Library*. St. George Rathborne's *Paddling Under Palmettos* and *Sunset Ranch* have 1901 Street and Smith copyright dates. James Otis's *Chased Through Norway* has an 1891 and an 1899 Street and Smith copyright which usually (but not always) means an 1891 paperback issue and an 1899 hardcover issue. *Frank Merriwell's School Days* has 1896 and 1901 copyrights. [1896 refers to the appearance of the material in *Tip Top Weekly*. Ed]

I also have paperback editions of many *Boys' Own Library* titles. *The Young Bridge Tender* by Arthur M. Winfield (Edward Stratemeyer) was advertised and sold separately as the first (and only) volume of the Silver Lake Series. *The Tour of the Zero Club*, which was initially published in paperback, became the first (and only) title in the Zero Club Series when Street and Smith published it in hardcover.

*Publishers' Weekly*, September 28, 1901, advertised the *Boys' Own Library* as a series of 100 copyrighted titles by Ellis, Alger, Otis, Matthew White, Jr., Gordon Stables and other celebrated authors. "They are the equal of the average \$1.50 publications in every respect save one, price, which is just half."

It appears that the Street and Smith management was uncertain about the concept of the series. My early copy of *Neka, the Boy Conjuror* (copyright 1902 and dating from either 1902 or 1903) advertises The Frank Merriwell Series (three books) and the Rockspur Athletic Series (three books) as well as Rathborne's The Ranch and Range Series (*Sunset Ranch* only) and Camp and Canoe Series (three books). All of these books sold for \$1 each. As an

interesting side note, The Rockspur Athletic Series ad reads: "Three other books will be added to the Series later on. Their titles are *The Rockspur Athletes*, *The Rockspur Crew*, and *The Rockspur Champions*." There is no evidence that Patten ever wrote these books. The *Boys' Own Library* ("Handsomely Bound in Cloth" and "Price, 75 cents per Volume" as a heading) was also advertised, but only 87 volumes were listed.

In ads in other early Street and Smith juveniles, Stratemeyer's *The Young Bridge Tenders* and *Tour of the Zero Club* cost \$1.25. The price of 75 cents a book remained constant with the *Boys' Own Library*. All of the individual titles mentioned above (by Patten, Rathborne, and Stratemeyer) were later added to the *Boys' Own Library* and the price per book reduced accordingly.

Regardless of the 100 titles mentioned in *Publishers' Weekly*, my earliest listing of the *Boys' Own Library* contains only 87 titles. I believe that separate series and individual titles were added until the total reached 100. Later this was increased to 135 for the Street and Smith imprints.

The Federal and McKay ads can be confusing since they are often old Street and Smith ads. At various times they listed 98, 140, 146, 150, and 156 titles (this last is in a Federal Henty, *With Wolfe in Canada*, the most I have seen advertised). To show the problem with listings in ads, my Caldwell reprint of *Neka, the Boy Conjuror* has the original early Street and Smith *Boys' Own Library* listing of 87 titles, but on a different size paper from the text, which is bound into the back of the book. Through the ads we can see how Street and Smith, Federal, and McKay added authors and titles or substituted some for older and/or less popular authors which were dropped.

Where did the publisher get the stories for the *Boys' Own Library*? This is where the original Street and Smith records, now at Syracuse University, have been particularly helpful. At various times the editors made lists of the serials (including authors and titles) from publication like *Half Holiday*, *Army and Navy Weekly*, and *Good News* which were available to be collected in books.

Some of these lists include the real names of the authors when a pseudonym was employed and there are comments about individual stories. As one example: about *Stolen Gold* (published under the Arthur M. Winfield pseudonym), they say: "Detective fair story Stratemeyer Author will revise." We may note that *Canoe and Camp-Fire*, by W. B. Lawson was used for "Rathborne's Series" and eventually as part of the *Boys' Own Library*. Horatio Alger's *Adrift in the City* is shown as sold to Porter and Coates.

Several Stratemeyer titles appear on one list as part of the *Boys' Own Library*, but none of them appear on the earliest list of 87 titles. This list may have been



compiled later than the others.

To sum up: my approach to researching the *Boys' Own Library* has been to begin by examining the books themselves, then consult *Publishers' Weekly*, and finally the records in the Street and Smith Archives at Syracuse. What questions remain? There are many. I want more specific dates about when Street and Smith began hardcover printing, when they began printing hardcover juveniles, and when they stopped hardcover printing. [The publisher actually experimented with hardcover printing through much of its history; a later example is the Chelsea House imprint used in the 1920s and 1930s. Ed] I would like more specifics about when they added series or individual titles to the *Boys' Own Library*. Who made these decisions and why?

While research provides answers to many questions, invariably it also provides many new questions.

# DIME NOVEL COLLECTABLES FOR SALE

850 Issues of Tip Top Weekly - #1 thru 850 - April 18, 1896 thru July 27, 1912  
124 Issues of New Tip Top Weekly - #13 thru 136 - Oct. 26, 1912 thru March 6, 1915  
179 Issues of Doc Savage - March 1933 thru Oct. 1943  
1072 Issues of Argosy/All Story Weekly - Jan. 1919 thru 1940

**CALL (813) 726-7554 MARC HUDSON**

## ADVENTURE PARADE

### Our Favorite Storytellers Pass in Review

Rocco Musemeche  
New Iberia, LA

In this issue we conclude the series of glimpses of some of the most famous writers for *Argosy* and their stories that appeared in the pages of that first pulp magazine of them all. These sketches were drawn from a paper presented at the Popular Culture Association conference in Chicago, April 6-9, 1994. This is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of the writings of any of these writers, only their work for Frank Munsey's publications issued from the offices at 280 Broadway.

**Erle Stanley Gardner** If Erle Stanley Gardner dogged the footsteps of George F. Worts in imitating Gillian Hazeltine with Perry Mason, he most surely was original with his unique character Lester Leith, a gentleman crook who played the role of man about town, sprawling impassively in lounging robes and slippers under the scrutiny of Scuttles, his valet, who was in reality an undercover agent of the police.

The Lester Leith stories which appeared in *Detective Fiction Weekly* did not reach the silver screen so it is not surprising he did not achieve the same popularity as did Perry Mason. But, known and appreciated, he was in a series of yarns that heightened the curiosity of readers. The format was the same. Leith took his lounging ease to be baited by Scuttles who was ever in the entrapment mood. Leith would snap at the bait and proceed to lead the readers on an excursion of legerdemain that was exceptionally hilarious . . . and clever.

Ever involved in curious circumstances requiring a solution for the benefit of his bank account, Leith moved with an uncanny touch and the aid of unusual props to the consternation of Scuttles and anyone else involved.

Take the story "The Man on the End," where Leith applies his extremely healthy wits in the solving of a bank murder mystery with the help of such zany props as a couple of funeral suits, a spittoon, and a bale of hay. A battered dog collar and a rusty hair curler were all he needed to solve two murders in "Put it in Writing."

In "Cold Clues," Leith uses a bulldog, 28 dice, a second hand car, and a stove to recover a cache of diamonds. And in "Lester Frames a Fence," he purchases a volcano in the interest of art, and a fortune in jewels comes his way via liver and onions and leather goods in "One That Got Away."

When baby carriages have sirens attached and smoke bombs take the place of calling cards, look for shenanigans in "Black Feather." In "Double Shadows,"

what does an ounce of baking powder have to do with Lester's quest for stolen gems? If you were in the know as Lester was then the answer is simple.

"Both Ends Against the Middle," has as part of its clever plot Lester starting a business with a hired secretary; while a lying lady plus a jar of jam stirs up an unforgettable romp in "The Play's the Thing."

Gardner did not foresee the future popularity of Perry Mason nor did he fully exploit the amazing success of the Lester Leith series, thus leaving his readers wondering about the reason for its termination. Who can tell if Lester Leith, given free rein, might have become more popular than Perry Mason?

**Theodore Roscoe** Should the power of words come to be recorded, those of Theodore Roscoe would register eight on the Richter Scale, for here was a wordsmith as near to excellence as possible.

From short stories in *Argosy* to writing for the Navy department during World War II, Ted remained a general favorite. Equipped as he was with a nimble mind and a writing style unlike any other author, he gave his readers precisely what they needed and expected. He did it with a combination of humor, terror, adventure and mystery in a technique somehow free from duplication. As related in Audrey Parente's biography, *Theodore Roscoe: Pulpmaster*, Ted's words were deceptive in that they appeared to be in black and white when they were really in Technicolor.

Haiti, the Foreign Legion, America of the past, and anywhere East of Suez were the usual backdrops of a Roscoe story, and he made the most of it in settings that placed you in the center of the action. No matter if it was a voodoo-haunted mansion thick with puzzle and gore, or waters in which an offshore fleet of gold bearing galleons were sent to the bottom long ago, reading entertainment was there.

Two of his most gruesome yarnspinning efforts in the Caribbean were "A Grave Must Be Deep" and "Z is for Zombie." The cover of "Grave" is credited with being one of the most compelling ever published; it depicts a cadaver lurching upright from his coffin in the glow of funeral candlelight, affixing his egg shell stare on the prospective magazine purchaser. Nightmarish, maybe, but people bought the story, not the cadaver.

Theodore Roscoe also reached readers with his delightful dip into rural America with his Four Corners series (these were adventures experienced by a youngster whose uncle was Sheriff in a small town about 100 miles from New York) and his red, white, and blue profiles of past presidents.



Among Roscoe's stories, the public's favorite were those blockbusters exploding from the bearded lips of Thibaut Corday, the redoubtable ancient legionnaire seated at a sidewalk cafe in the lilac gloaming of North Africa. Here at his mesmerizing best, he was truly a Scheherezade. It would take a book to describe the magic he wove into these exceptionally entertaining stories.

Roscoe wrote war stories, vivid in their telling, such as his "War Declared" and "Remember Tomorrow," and, of course, the thought-provoking "Kingdom of Hell."

One does not merely read a Roscoe story; one absorbs it, transported on a magic carpet from oak panelled office or worker's humble dwelling to faraway locales, taking along a taste of the exotic with the freshness of cream. Ted does that which is called "the awakening of taste buds." Jaded reading habits? Reach for one of Ted's sure cure stories.

He fills his stories with colorful nicknames for people and places—like Yankee Bill the Elephant, Waterfront Willy, Monsieur the Devil, the Toad, Jensen the Dane, Uncle Iron Mask, the Lane of the Five Lovely Smells, Café of the Vine, and Alley of the Cloth Merchants. And, of course, he adds verse from the Legion step-off music, "Le Casquette de Pere Bugeaud."

Theodore Roscoe laughed several years ago when he was told of all the writers the Munsey publications produced he was the only one to rate as Admiral of the good ship *Argosy* (referring to the image of a sailing ship used on the magazine cover at one time). "Why, Ted," he was told, "you're good enough to steer *Argosy* to a mooring on a weatherbeaten pier in a landlocked lake."

His blue eyes agleam with humor, he answered in four words, "That's quite a dimension."

But so is his vocabulary, three-dimensional, and because he and other writers paced the deck of the *Argosy*, swift in the agility of the written word, we are the richer for them today.

**Edgar Rice Burroughs** This former soldier, cowpuncher and policeman gained recognition by his creation of a lithe lad swinging among the treetops of an equatorial forest. Is it too bold to suggest that reading the Apeman's exploits did much allay the grief of the nation in the aftermath of the sinking of the *Titanic*?

So popular was Tarzan that it was common enough for a Burroughs story not associated with the Apeman to be billed as "By the Creator of Tarzan."

Burroughs gratified the desire of his readers by creating from his fertile mind

adventures of strange men and beasts in settings of exotic lost cities and interplanetary realms.

Almost the equal of Tarzan were characters like John Carter of Mars and Carson of Venus who appeared in many stories. Among Burroughs' other stories, "Seven Worlds to Conquer" tells about a man left behind in an innerworld following an expedition by dirigible and presents the most romantic pairing since Carter and the incomparable Dejah Thoris.

So great is the impact of Burroughs' characters that small fry today romp through shopping malls sounding the victory cry of the bull ape. The love affair of Romeo and Juliet has its place in literature's lofty status, but the legions of Burroughs fans enjoy the romance of Dejah Thoris and John Carter among the stars, a setting Shakespeare failed to obtain for his two lovers.

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## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Contributions are invited for a collection of essays on histories of the mass reading public -- as well as publishers' histories which illustrate how publishers take their readers into account -- for a planned volume directed to the scholarly community. To be called *The Global Common Reader*, this book will be for undergraduates, graduate students and scholars; it will be a book devoted to fresh scholarship on the reading and publishing of popular literature from any period in any country. Papers are invited on histories of the mass reading public, which sometimes read "high culture"; Shakespeare and Dickens, for example, were popular culture in their day, reading audiences, publishing firms, distribution, and other relevant aspects of reading and publishing popular literature.

The University of Massachusetts Press has expressed an initial interest in such a volume for its series "Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book." The editorial review process includes scrutiny by at least two peer reviewers, as well as the Series Advisory Board and the Press's editorial board.

*The Chicago Manual of Style, 14th Edition*, will be used. Five hard copies of each manuscript submission are required in English. The submission deadline for completed manuscripts is 1 October 1997. Manuscripts should be sent to Lydia C. Schurman, Editor, 3215 North 22nd Street, Arlington, VA 22201.

Please send inquiries to <nvschul@nv.cc.va.us>

## FULMINATIONS

Being Further Comments and Annotations  
to the Episodes in the Saga of *Legend*

**For Those Who Came in Late:** This is a further continuation of the series begun in the June issue in which we discuss the Science and Inventions of Janos Christoff Bartok, as presented on the *Legend* television show.

### Episode Titles and Abbreviations

Birth of a Legend (BIRTH); Mr. Pratt Goes to Sheridan (PRATT); Legend on His President's Secret Service (SECRET); Custer's Next to Last Stand (CUSTER); The Life, Death and Life of Wild Bill Hickok (WILD); Knee-High Noon (NOON); The Gospel According to Legend (GOSPEL); Bone of Contention (BONE); Revenge of the Herd (HERD); Fall of a Legend (FALL); Clueless in San Francisco (CLUELESS); Skeletons in the Closet (SKELETONS)

### Devices to Ward Off the Heavily-Armed Uncouth

It was Professor Bartok (in BIRTH) who referred to those villains whom Ernest Pratt (aka Nicodemus Legend) might encounter as the "heavily-armed uncouth among us." We have borrowed the Professor's phrase to describe below that category of his scientific devices designed as weapons in the arsenal utilized against evil-doers.

**Weapons:** While it may be argued that all of Professor Bartok's inventions could be used by Nicodemus Legend in his pursuit of villains in the Old West, there are some that are more effective than others. Chief among these is the **Bartok Bi-Polar, High Intensity, Electrofulminator** which, when fully charged, produces an electric ray that can be directed against an individual. The range of this hand-held device is variable: it can be used in close quarters against an assailant with a knife or from a distance to knock a man off his horse. Its initial use comes in the first episode when Silas Slaughter draws his gun in the Buffalo Head Saloon and Bartok disarms him (BIRTH; NOON; GOSPEL; BONE; REVENGE; FALL; CLUELESS; SKELETONS). Outlaws refer to its effect on them when they style it the **Legend Lightning Bolt** (NOON). Another weapon of sorts is the **Automated Spanish Riata**. Based on the principle of the hola, this throws a cord with weights attached to encircle the fleeing person. In its try out in Bartok's laboratory it cut the head off the clothes



dummy used for target practice. Bartok admitted it needed a little adjustment (NOON).

Initially designed as a signal device, the **Bartok Aerospheric Rescue Carronade** is also capable of being used as a weapon. A device that fires dry phosphorescent particles skyward, it was inspired by Pratt's Naval adventures in his dime novel *Ride the Angry Waves*. Bartok designed the **Carronade** to be used by ships at sea to signal for help. In the series it is used to drive off Jack McCall and his gang when they attack the compound. (WILD)

Related to these most obvious types of weapons are **smoke bombs**, a simple device used to ward off assailants (SKELETONS), and **sonic grenades**, devices planted in the ground and which resemble pinwheel fireworks. Detonated by a trigger device in Bartok's hands, they are used to distract the posse sent to capture Pratt. Essentially harmless, they spark, smoke and scream, but are "only irritating to horses, dogs and the occasional warthog" (FALL); it is necessary for anyone using the sonic grenades to outfit his horses with **anacoustic head baffles** (ear muffs) to prevent them from being spooked by the explosives.

**Protective Devices Against Weapons:** Bartok not only invented several weapons, but the counter-weapons and protection against them. The **Bartok Body Bullet Barricade** was designed to limit the effectiveness of virtually every firearm. In effect a bullet-proof vest, it was worn by Wild Bill Hickok under his coat when he went to Deadwood in August 1876 (WILD). It may be argued that the **Bartok Ocular Deflector** is also a protective device. One of the models of glasses with which Bartok fit Wild Bill Hickok comes with this (which also includes a complimentary case). These would be an early form of sun glasses, "for those pesky showdowns when the sun gets in your eyes" (WILD).

The most elaborate device is the **Bartok Tight Focus Electromagnetic Disarmer**, a leather, Western-style vest with wires and electrical switches, used in conjunction with a large, hand-held horseshoe-shaped magnet and transformer which attracts the weapons of one's opponents—right out of their hands. It works best within 50 feet of the target. This is the device that Bartok (in BIRTH) introduces as one to be used against the "uncouth." Related to this, and a variation on the principle, though not a defensive device, are the **magnetic handcuffs**. This pair of special handcuffs with a built-in magnetic device is activated by a foot pedal in the quadrovelocipede. In NOON the rustler named Lyle is fitted with a pair when an arrangement is made to exchange him for the kidnapped "Nicodemus Legend, Jr." When Lyle's outlaw brother draws his gun he is disarmed when the gun is attracted to the handcuffs. A number of "tracking devices" are used in the series. For an example, see the article on the

**Automated Animals** in the column in our October issue.

Another hand-held device which has many functions is the **Bartok Arctic Liquidic Air Mist**, a spray which freezes objects it touches. According to Bartok, "when steel is brought below minus 190 degrees Celsius, the molecular structure crystallizes and shatters like glass." He warns Pratt not to inhale lest it freeze his nostrils. When Pratt is about to be hanged (FALL) Bartok directs it against the hangman's rope, causing it to snap, and thus save Pratt's life.

What would a crusade against the heavily-armed uncouth be without **Surveillance Devices**? Among the most ingenious is the **Bartok Thermal Emissions Detector**. A type of nightscope, this was predicted by Legend in *Blood on the Moonlit Prairie*. The detectors are sensitive to "thermal emanations" and produce an image on a screen of the source of the emanations. This image can be magnified for better identification (SECRET). A variant on this principle is the **optiscope**, another type of nightscope. Instead of detecting emanations from the source, phosphorescent particles are sprayed on the clothes of the person to be pursued; these are shed, then detected through the coated celluloid filter in the optiscope, thereby leading the pursuers to the hideout of the pursued (WILD). Then there is the **Bartok Tri-Dimensional Recording Camera**; the wheels on this are manipulated so a transparent image of the identified tracks of a horse are superimposed on unidentified prints on the ground; electrical circuits sense when the two prints are identical (FALL).

The final category is the **Device for Opening Doors or Escaping Locked Rooms**. Included in this is the so-called "silent" explosive, the **Bartok Smokeless Nitroglycerin Gelatin**. "Better than dynamite, more efficient, easier to detonate; the future of explosives" is how its inventor characterizes this form of explosive as part of his effort to advance the science of bank robbery. Safe-cracking was perhaps Bartok's least successful endeavor. After several attempts, the gelatin is detonated electrically, whereupon it blows the safe in the Midland Merchants' Bank of Tucson through the roof (PRATT). A truly quiet and successful device is the **magnetic door hinge pin extractor** which draws the pins from a locked door hinges upwards allowing the door to be opened without actually disturbing the lock (GOSPEL).

And who can forget the **portable oxygen cutting torch** smuggled into Pratt's jail cell by Bartok in the guise of a silver coffee set? There is an oxygen tank in the coffee pot that can be activated, the candy dish is the combustion chamber; and the flower vase on the tray is the igniter. Properly assembled, it allows Pratt to cut his way through the bars to freedom. The tray itself serves as a safety mask to prevent injury to the eyes during its use (FALL).

Most of these Bartokian devices do not have exact counterparts in the dime novels. The Frank Reade, Jr. and Jack Wright stories depend heavily on vehicles (airships and submarines) with only an occasional suggestion of what might be termed "creative weaponry" or "creative security systems" for the secret laboratory or workshop. (We can recall a device that Rick Brant invented to tell who was at the front door without looking out the window, but that was more than seventy years later. Even Tom Swift's electric rifle post-dates Bartok's wonders of electricity.) The traps the Reades and Wrights used against their pursuers were mundane by comparison with the land, sea, and air vehicles.

We may need to look to the Nick Carter detective stories for some hint of a parallel development. There we find the picklocks that enable him to pass through locked doors with ease (referred to in many stories); the miniature camera, no larger than a watch, which can be worn under his shirt (the lens is his shirt button) for recording people without their knowledge ("The Five Kernels of Corn," *Nick Carter Library*, no. 139, March 31, 1894); and the instrument pressed against the ear by which he can overhear conversations carried in low tones at the other end of the room ("Nick Carter's False Clew; or, Playing the Dupe for Big Game," *Nick Carter Weekly*, no. 335, May 30, 1903).

It was Nick Carter who invented an explosive more powerful than nitroglycerin that expended its force in only one direction ("Nick Carter's Strange Power; or, The Great Jewel Scandal," *Nick Carter Weekly*, no. 461, October 28, 1905). It was Nick Carter who discovered a universal antidote to the drugs and poisons most favored by the criminal classes ("Nick Carter's Brightest Pupil; or, The Great Counterfeiting Case," *Nick Carter Weekly*, no. 42, October 16, 1897). And it was Nick Carter who knew the secret of Atchison's Acid, the most powerful acid ever known, which could cut through anything, even granite and concrete, as easily as a saw cutting through wood ("The Auburn Sensation; or, Nick Carter's Trail of Twigs," *Nick Carter Stories*, no. 102, August 22, 1914).

Of course these came after 1876 when Bartok's inventions were said to have been in active use. Were Bartok a part of the real dime novel world, we might suggest an influence on the development of fictional science in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century.

Sam Sherman, Ipswich, Mass.  
J. Randolph Cox, Dundas, Minn.

**Nick Carter in New Jersey.** Did you know that Nick Carter himself reads *Dime Novel Round-Up*? In October your editor attended the annual convention of the Friends of Old Time Radio held at the Holiday Inn North in Newark, New Jersey. While there it was his pleasure to renew an old friendship with Lon Clark, the actor who portrayed **Nick Carter, Master Detective** on the radio from 1943 to 1955. It was this interpretation of the detective adventures of Nick Carter on Sunday afternoons on the Mutual Broadcasting System that was largely responsible for your editor's introduction to radio detective drama and, eventually, the dime novels about the character of Nick Carter. Were it not for Lon Clark, we might not have embarked on our extensive study of Nick Carter and we might not be editing this magazine. In the past, *Dime Novel Round-Up* has been read by some illustrious dime novel authors, including Gilbert Patten, the author of the Frank Merriwell stories. Therefore, we felt it only fitting to welcome Nick Carter to our mailing list.



Nick Carter (Lon Clark) and J. Randolph Cox. Newark, NJ, October 18, 1996



Recent books in review, or forthcoming publications noted

### ALCOTT STILL A FAVORITE

Louisa May Alcott. *The Feminist Alcott: Stories of a Woman's Power*. Edited with an Introduction by Madeleine B. Stern. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996. ISBN 1-55553-265-9 (hardcover) \$40.00; ISBN 1-55553-266-7 (papercovers) \$14.95.

Once again we have a collection of selected thrillers by "The Children's Friend" to examine. There is nothing new in this collection, all of the stories having been presented in previous anthologies (see **DNRU**, August 1995, p. 104). What is new is the emphasis on the theme of feminism found in the stories here: "Pauline's Passion and Punishment," "V. V.: or, Plots and Counterplots," "Behind a Mask; or, A Woman's Power," and "Taming a Tartar." Here the theme of the sexual power struggle is not only one of the threads of her plots, but the primary one. Once again, Ms Stern has provided us with an introduction that is not just a variation on her earlier introductions to these collections, but a fresh view of the subject. (We also wish to note the recent appearance of another collection by Louisa May Alcott, *Modern Magic*, 1995; five of her sensational thrillers have been given a permanent place in the Modern Library edition of the classics.) jrc

### PULP MYSTERIES

Howard Wandrei. *The Last Pin*. Edited and Introduced by D. H. Olson. Illustrated by Gary Gianni. Minneapolis: Fedogan & Bremer Mystery, 1996. ISBN 1-878252-25-9 \$29.00.

Connoisseurs of hard-boiled crime fiction, rejoice! This collection of eleven novelettes and short stories preserves the work of as fine a writer as ever wrote for the rough, wood pulp pages of the genre fiction magazines of the 1930s. Howard Wandrei of St. Paul, Minnesota, may have peopled his stories with formula figures, but he breathed life in them by drawing on personal experience as well as his own locale. D. H. Olson's introduction provides the right amount of biographical, historical, and social detail to enhance the reader's appreciation of the fiction which follows. Gary Gianni's illustrations, done in the style of the period, retain a modern vitality. The publishers have an ambitious program of pulp fiction preservation ahead of them which deserves to succeed. jrc

## PULP REPRINTS

*Behind the Mask*, No. 37 (Summer 1996). Tom and Ginger Johnson, 504 E. Morris Street, Seymour, TX 76380. \$5.50 per issue; \$22.00 four issues (includes postage).

Facsimile reprints of "Jewels of the Rajah" (featuring The Mongoose), by Johnston McCulley, from *Detective Fiction Weekly*, Sept. 17, 1932; "Network of Hate" (featuring The Eagle), by Capt. Kerry McRoberts, from *Thrilling Spy Stories*, Winter 1940; "The Fifth Column Murders" (featuring the Candid Camera Kid), by John L. Benton [Norman Daniels], from *Detective Novels*, December 1940; "He Floats Through the Air" (featuring Captain McGrail), by Richard Sale, from *Detective Fiction Weekly*, Sept. 30, 1939.

Ed Lauterbach

## BOOKS AND PERIODICALS RECEIVED

*The Bean Home Newsletter*, Vol. 7 no. 4 (Summer 1996) [Dedicated to the memory of Walter R. Brooks, author of the "Freddy the Pig" series; a publication of the Friends of Freddy] "Back to the Bean Farm: Rereading the Freddy Books" (discusses *Wiggins for President* also published as *Freddy the Politician*); "Aspects of Canadiana in the Freddy Books"; preview of the 1996 "Freddyfest" in Cooperstown, NY. Connie Arnold, 5A Laurel Hill Road, Greenbelt, MD 20770-1779. \$12 for two years.

*Burroughs Bulletin*, New Series no. 27, Summer 1996 [Published quarterly for members of the (Edgar Rice) Burroughs Bibliophiles] Focus on ERB's *The Moon Maid* Trilogy; reports on current media projects involving Tarzan, including the syndicated *Tarzan: The Epic Adventures*. George McWhorter, Curator, The Burroughs Memorial Collection, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292. \$28 per year

*ECHOES*, Vol. 15, no. 5 (October 1996) Whole number 89 [For pulp magazine collectors] "The Saga of the Masked Rider" (part 8) by Nick Carr; "Dan Fowler: Ace of the G Men" (part 4) by John Edwards. "An Interview with Jack Suto of Vintage New Media" (plans for electronic publishing of *The Spider*, *Operator 5*, and *G 8*). Fading Shadows, Inc. 504 E. Morris Street, Seymour, TX 76380 \$4.50 per issue, 3 issues for \$13.50, 6 issues for \$26. Bi monthly with extra issue at Pulpeon time.

*High Adventure*, No. 30 (November 1996) [Facsimile editions of pulp magazine fiction from the past] "Drums of Destruction," by Curtis Steele [Emile Tepperman], from *Secret Agent Operator* #5, July-August 1937, this is the 9th installment in the "Purple Invasion" series; "The Body in the Taxi," by Murray Leinster, from *Black Bat Detective Mysteries*, October 1933. Adventure House, 914 Laredo Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901. \$6.00 per issue, \$1.25 postage.

*Martha's KidLit Newsletter*, Vol. 8, nos. 8, 9, 10 (August, September, October 1996) [For collectors of Out of Print Childrens' Books] "Collecting the Hardy Boys Series," by Charles Heffelfinger (August); "Collecting Nursery Rhymes," by Lou Ann Bivens (September); Book Exhibitions (October). Martha Rasmussen, Box 1488, Ames, IA 50014. \$30 per year.

*Newsboy*, Vol. 34, no. 4 (July-August 1996) [For collectors of Horatio Alger and other juvenile series authors] "New York Book Company Algers," by Brad Chase; "Edward Stratemeyer: Teenage Publisher," by Bill Gowen; "Signed and Inscribed Books," by Bill Gowen. Robert E. Kasper, 585 E. St. Andrews Drive, Media, PA 19063. \$20 per year, which includes membership in the Horatio Alger Society.

*Pulp Vault*, Nos. 12/13 (1996) [Irregularly published anthology of articles about and facsimile reprints of pulp fiction] 160 pages of articles, fiction, and checklists. Tattered Pages Press, 6942 N. Oleander Avenue, Chicago, IL 60631. Single copies \$10. No subscriptions.

*Story Paper Collectors' Digest*, Vol. 50, nos. 596-597 (August and October 1996) [For collectors of British boys' and girls' stories and papers; the British *Dime Novel Round-Up* and a publication that can be recommended without reservation!]. Frankly, there's too much good material here, texts and illustrations to enumerate. Mary Cadogan, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent BR3 2PY, England. Monthly publication. Write for subscription rates.

*Susabella Passengers and Friends*, (September 1996) [A nostalgia publication for collectors and readers of all children's series books, celebrating the fun of collecting] Series books with themes from the Orient. Continuing report on the Las Vegas PCA convention. Garrett Knute Lothe, 80 Ocean Pines Lane, Pebble Beach, CA 93953. \$15 per year, bi-monthly.

*The Whispered Watchword*, Vol. #96-7 (September), Vol. #96-8 (October) and Vol. #96-9 (November 1996) [Newsletter of the Society of Phantom Friends] Regular features include author interviews and the fun of collecting; reviews of new series books; Judy Bolton's 50th Wedding Anniversary! Cats in Series Books. Kate Emburg, 4100 Cornelia Way, N. Highland, CA 95660. \$26 per year.

*Yellowback Library*, Numbers 147 (September) and 148 (October 1996) [Series Books, Dime Novels, and Related Literature; Specializes in advertising Wants and Offers; this is the place to look for dealers who may have those long-wanted books] "Don Sturdy," by Rocco Musemeche; "Howard R. Garis' Dick Hamilton Series," by Gil O'Gara; "A Dime Novel Gallery" and "Favorite Dime Novel Scenes" (facsimiles). Gil O'Gara, P. O. Box 36172, Des Moines, IA 50315. \$30 per year, \$15 for six months.

## LETTERS

The rates have gone up considerably since I last renewed in Sept. '93 @ \$25 for 3 years, but I very much like the ways in which you've improved the journal.

Jim Deutsch  
Washington, DC

Before Eddie retired as editor in 1994 he and I discussed the subscription rate and agreed to increase it to better reflect the reality of the cost of publication. We hope to hold the line with the current rate as long as possible, give you your money's worth, and reward our long-time subscribers by resuming the occasional series of "Bibliographic Listings" before long.  
ED.

My wife Kate enjoyed very much her [telephone] talk with you this morning. We are delighted to be subscribers and appreciative of your offering us all of those back issues.

As Kate may have told you, we only last night got our first look at several issues of the journal, but we are already looking forward to reading all of them, regardless of how long it takes.

John E. Mustain  
Menlo Park, Calif.

We also enjoyed the telephone call referred to above and especially to the enthusiasm for the publication expressed. We hope to live up to our readers' expectations. ED.

I was pleasantly surprised to read in Kathleen Chamberlain's account of her twenty minute experience in the Stratemeyer Records wherein she makes mention of Horatio Alger's play "Adrift in New York."

Some seven-odd years ago, while scouring the copyright records, I came across the registration of this play. It was deposited for registration by Alger while he was living in New York, on February 5, 1889.



Having high hopes that a copy of the play would surely be in the Copyright Office's holdings, I wrote off to that Office in order to determine if I could obtain a photocopy.

Unfortunately, it seems that the Copyright Office had not retained a copy of the play and an answer came back to that effect. I had hoped to republish the contents of the play in DNRU, but that idea went down the drain.

Now it is highly possible that a copy of the play may yet be found in the Stratemeyer Records, since, as Ms Chamberlain points out, Stratemeyer had paid for a novelization of the play.

The 21st century promises to be an exciting one for researchers. Let us hope that the New York Public Library can find the funding to bring to fruition the cataloging of this most important archive.

Victor Berch  
Marlboro, Mass.

I bought a copy of the Farah/Nash bibliography on the strength of the review in DNRU. I don't like the way it's bound, but it does make fascinating reading. I think the usefulness of this book is severely compromised by the decision not to include *Yellowback Library* and *Mystery & Adventure Series Review* articles. This limits the coverage and scholars ought to be more than miffed by it. On the other hand, they do have a lot of ephemeral stuff, but this is not the comprehensive bibliography it could have been, if they had kept their annotations briefer (terser) and used a smaller type. Anyhow, I'm glad to have the book and wouldn't have bought it if you hadn't run Didi's good review.

Walter Albert  
Pittsburgh, Penn.

## NOTES & QUERIES

**Mea Culpa!** Once again, Charlie Shibuk chides us for getting the date of the first Perry Mason novel wrong by a year (October, page 169). *The Case of the Velvet Claws* was published in 1933, not 1934. We must have been thinking of the first Nero Wolfe mystery, *Fer de Lance* from 1934. This was in Rocco Musemeche's article, but it was one of little bits of information your editor inserted to fill out the facts. We would also be remiss if we didn't admit that the



basic facts of George F. Worts' life as reported in Bob Sampson's *Yesterday's Faces* (volume 5) and included in the article differ from information given in Fred Cook's introduction to George F. Worts' *The Monster of the Lagoon* (Mercer Island, WA: Starmont House, 1991). There the place and date of Worts' death are "southern Nevada on February 25, 1967" and not the "Hawaii in 1968" recorded on page 168 of the October issue. See Rocco's **Adventure Parade** column in this issue for further information about the source of his sketches of favorite authors and our editorial emendations. We also apologize for giving Bill Lofts (see page 180) too little credit for the number of articles he has published. It should be **2,000** not 200!

**Street & Smith Archives Preserved.** We are delighted to report that Syracuse University has received a two-year, \$250,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Preservation and Access for the preservation microfilming, cataloging, and conservation treatment of the Street and Smith Publishing Company Archives. Those of you with access to the World Wide Web are encouraged to visit the web site at

<http://web.syr.edu/~speccoll/street1.htm>

for further information. We will report further developments as we learn of them.

**Dime Novel Research in Asia.** Recently we welcomed to our subscription list **Keiko Hori** of Yokohama, Japan. A student of English and American literature she is seeking information about an American novel from the last part of the nineteenth century called *White Lily* or *White Lilies*. The author is a woman and the story may have appeared in one of the many dime novel series of popular fiction, such as the *Seaside Library*. To date those of us who have tried to assist Ms Hori in her quest have met with failure. We cannot identify the author or the plot twist that makes this story unique: The hero's sweetheart chooses marriage to a rich man instead of to him; at the end he flees from the site of the wedding because he cannot bear to hear the sound of the church bells. Can anyone help on this? Please get in touch with the editor who will convey the information to Ms Hori. In our next issue we will tell you more about her research and how she came to be interested in American dime novels.